

E. RECK (ed.), *From Frege to Wittgenstein: Perspectives on Early Analytic Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. xv + 470pp. 65.00 US\$.

Reviewed by

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The volume under review contains fifteen new essays by some of the most influential scholars of the history of early analytic philosophy. The focus of the essays is, as the editor says in the preface, ‘the work of Gottlob Frege and of Ludwig Wittgenstein (mostly the early Wittgenstein), as well as various ties between them’ (p. x). The essays are divided into four parts. The first part, ‘Background and General Themes’, contains essays by E. Reck, G. Gabriel and S. Gerrard. The second part on Frege has contributions by H. Sluga, S. Shieh, M. Ruffino and J. Weiner. Essays on the relation between Frege and the early Wittgenstein by W. Goldfarb, D. Macbeth, T. Ricketts and C. Diamond comprise the third part. The volume concludes with essays by I. Proops, J. Floyd, M. Ostrow and J. Conant on the early Wittgenstein. This volume is an important contribution to our understanding of Frege and the early Wittgenstein and should prove a help to specialists in the history of analytic philosophy. I have chosen to briefly discuss seven of these essays with an emphasis on topics in the history and philosophy of logic.

Reck’s opening essay, ‘Wittgenstein’s “Great Debt” to Frege: Biographical Traces and Philosophical Themes’, gives a helpful overview of our current knowledge of the contacts between Frege and Wittgenstein. Reck argues quite persuasively for the conclusion that Wittgenstein engaged with Frege’s work throughout his philosophical career. The depth of this engagement is in-

licated by, among other things, the letters from Frege to Wittgenstein (published only in 1989) and Wittgenstein's support of Geach and Black's publication of a volume of Frege's writings in the 1950s (p. 27). Reck concludes that Wittgenstein 'would have disdained any broad-brushed, unsympathetic criticisms of Frege's works, as can sometimes be found in the Wittgenstein literature today' (p. 31).

While Reck's essay does an excellent job of bringing the reader up to date on the historical and biographical relations between Frege and Wittgenstein, it does little to prepare the reader for the philosophical controversies that occupy many of the essays of the volume. These disputes occur mainly between those working in what could be called, for lack of a better term, the 'left-wing' of the history of analytic philosophy. The members of this school include Floyd, Goldfarb, Ricketts, Diamond, Weiner and Conant, as well as their students Gerrard, Shieh and Ostrow. These philosophers are generally hostile to any interpretation of either Frege or the early Wittgenstein that ascribes to them a philosophical or logical theory such as those proposed by the members of the 'right-wing', e.g. Dummett or Pears. They tend to see a close affinity between the later Wittgenstein's therapeutic conception of philosophy and the views of the early Wittgenstein, and, more surprisingly, sometimes even Frege. Diamond, for example, has argued that 6.54 of the *Tractatus* forces us to take the previous sentences of the book to be straightforward nonsense and that these views are related both to Frege's remarks on the distinction between concept and object and the later Wittgenstein's rejection of traditional philosophy.¹ I want to focus first on some of the 'left-wing' contributions to this volume and will then turn to a survey of some of the other essays.

Floyd's 'Number and Ascriptions of Number in Wittgenstein's *Tracta-*

tus' builds on Diamond's 'antimetaphysical yet antipositivist reading of the *Tractatus*' (p. 337) that I have just alluded to. Floyd applies this interpretation to Wittgenstein's obscure remarks on number. Eschewing any attempt to reconstruct a viable philosophy of arithmetic, she argues instead that 'Wittgenstein is attempting to recover ordinary modes of speaking about language – about mathematics in particular – in the face of what he regards as Frege's and Russell's missystematization' (p. 312). Even though Wittgenstein says 'A number is the exponent of an operation' (6.021), this should not be understood as a positive proposal, but only as a tool to help the reader recapture her pre-philosophical understanding of number. Floyd concludes that, contra Diamond and others, Wittgenstein is opposed to Frege's goals of clarifying our understanding of mathematics using logical theory (p. 340).

Rickett's 'Wittgenstein against Frege and Russell' investigates the details of some of Wittgenstein's criticisms of Frege and asks what they 'tell us about how Wittgenstein understood Frege' (p. 227). He focuses on Wittgenstein's complaint against Frege that 'if "the True" and "the False" were really objects, and were the arguments in $\sim p$ etc., then Frege's determination [Bestimmung] would not at all determine the sense of " $\sim p$ "' (p. 228, 4.431). Ricketts argues that according to Wittgenstein sentences cannot name the truth-values because for him names have no internal representational structure. This structure is essential, though, for Wittgenstein's understanding of the logical relations between sentences. If sentences are just complex names, then it is unclear how ' p ' relates to ' $\sim p$ ': 'As names, they have no representational structure; they do not say anything. Not agreeing or disagreeing with reality, they do not oppose, do not contradict each other' (p. 243). Ricketts traces Frege's belief that sentences are names to his use of the mathematical concepts of function and argument to understand the logical structure of

sentences. He concludes that Wittgenstein's criticisms of Frege show a deep understanding of Frege's philosophy and allow us to see how Wittgenstein's conception of sentences as models is opposed to Frege's.

Cora Diamond's 'Truth before Tarski ...' considers the relation between Frege's, Russell's and Wittgenstein's views of truth. She argues that the picture theory of the *Tractatus* is not a genuine theory, but rather 'that talk of a sentence as having a relation to reality ... is meant in the *Tractatus* to dissolve from within' (p. 261). Instead '[o]ur ideas about correspondence are attempts to articulate features of our use of senseful sentences' (p. 271). Diamond sees this appeal to use as central to the early Wittgenstein's conception of language and claims that this is a point of contact between the early and later Wittgenstein (p. 273).

While I have touched only briefly on these essays, I want to make some remarks about the sort of methodology employed by the 'left-wing'. First, I have chosen this term because it indicates a spectrum of approaches. Generally, though, what is often missing in these approaches is the recognition of any broader philosophical context within which these philosophers developed. This, combined with the frequent appeal to surprising conclusions argued for in other articles, generally makes these contributions hard to accept or even to understand. For example, how likely is it that Wittgenstein thought, as Floyd insists, of the *Tractatus* as a 'funhouse of mirrors' (p. 312) whose aim was to undermine Frege's and Russell's conceptions of logic and language?

The remaining essays in the volume represent a diverse array of views of the relation between Frege and Wittgenstein, but all seem to reject the 'left-wing' approach. For example, Sluga's 'Frege on the Indefinability of Truth' sets out seven phases in the development of Frege's attitude towards truth. Throughout Sluga appeals to Frege's philosophical context including

the work of Kuno Fischer, Hermann Lotze, Wilhelm Windelband and Bruno Bauch. This historical work leads Sluga to see Frege's 1918 paper 'The Thought', part of the final phase of Frege's thinking about truth, as aimed at the early Wittgenstein: 'We can be sure that Frege wrote "The Thought" with Wittgenstein in mind' (p. 89).

Ruffino's 'Logical Objects in Frege's *Grundgesetze*, Section 10' investigates the motivations and consequences of Frege's identification of the two truth-values of his logical system with the extensions of two concepts. Ruffino uses this identification to try to understand Frege's attitude towards logical objects more generally. Invoking Frege's Platonism, he concludes that these identifications are not arbitrary stipulations, but are on the contrary conjectures that Frege thinks can be supported by the fruitfulness of their consequences. This conclusion is partly supported by a careful consideration of Frege's attitude towards the so-called 'Julius Caesar problem' and the later use of Axiom V of *Grundgesetze* to describe extensions.

The last essay that I will consider is Proops' 'The *Tractatus* on Inference and Entailment'. Proops focuses on Wittgenstein's claim that Frege and Russell thought that 'Laws of inference' (p. 283, 5.132) are needed to justify inferences. Wittgenstein denies that such laws are needed and claims instead that for propositions p and q , '[t]he method of inference is to be gathered from the two propositions alone' (p. 283, 5.132). Proops argues that Wittgenstein's worry is not, as Ricketts has suggested, that Russell fails to distinguish rules of inference from axioms. Wittgenstein thinks of inference in terms of 'internal' relations of entailment between propositions and worries that Frege and Russell fail to see this. As these relations are internal or essential, they cannot be described in propositions with a sense and so laws of inference purporting to do this must be rejected.

I suggest, then, that while this volume is an important contribution to our understanding of the history of analytic philosophy, the occupants of the ‘left-wing’ of the spectrum must present more evidence for their surprising conclusions.

Endnotes

1. C. Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit*, MIT Press, 1991, esp. ch. 6.